

THE BOOK OF ḤADĪTH

THE BOOK OF ḤADĪTH

Selected by Charles le Gai Eaton

From Robson's Translation of

MISHKĀT AL-MAṢABIḤ

Re-translated by Mahmoud Mostafa

Edited by Kabir Helminski & Jeremy Henzell-Thomas



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Notes on Transliteration

In most cases we have attempted to transliterate Arabic words as they are pronounced. Throughout this book, references to the Qurʾān are in parentheses. These refer to the name of the *sūrah*, the *sūrah* number, and verses (*āyāt*). When the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is mentioned, his mention is followed by the calligraphic symbol for *ṣalla Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*, “May the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him.” When Muḥammad’s companions are mentioned, they are followed with the symbol for *raḍīallāhu ʿanhu* (ﷺ “May Allāh be pleased with him”), *raḍīallāhu ʿanha* (ﷺ “May Allāh be pleased with her”), or *raḍīallāhu ʿanhum* (ﷺ “May Allāh be pleased with them”). We have used the symbols to replace these blessings, but have not added them if they were not present in the original text.

When quoting the Qurʾān or referring in the text to Allāh ﷻ (“May He be glorified and exalted”), we have used the masculine pronoun. Please be aware that this is merely a limitation of language and that within the universe and understanding of the Qurʾān, God is without gender and far beyond any words or manner by which we might try to describe Him/Her. *Subḥān Allāhi Rabbil-ʿālamīn!*

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INTRODUCTION

Jeremy Henzell-Thomas

ḤADĪTH are accounts relating to the deeds and utterances of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ as remembered by his companions. They can be divided into two groups: *ḥadīth sharif* (“noble Ḥadīth”), the Prophet’s ﷺ own utterances, and *ḥadīth qudsi* (“sacred Ḥadīth”) in which God Himself speaks on the tongue of the Prophet ﷺ.

Reflecting on how best to approach the writing of an Introduction to this beautiful selection by Charles le Gai Eaton from the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, it struck me that what might most engage readers would be an authentic personal response to these Ḥadīth with some suggestions on how to use them in an educational context, rather than a detailed discussion of the complex and involved science of the study of Ḥadīth in which I do not claim to be an expert.

There is a vast literature on this subject which the reader may wish to consult, but it is not my purpose here to attempt to summarise in any systematic way the principles of this science. It will suffice to say here that the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* is a collection of over 6,000 Ḥadīth revised by Walī ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Khaṭīb at-Tabrīzī (d. 737 AH/1337 CE) from the *Masābīḥ as-Sunnah* by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn ibn Masʿūd al-Baghawī (d. 510/1116), the best known of the later large compilations which drew upon the early authoritative collections. These collections included the “Six Muṣannaf”, the canon of six books (*al-kutub as-sittah*) comprising the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* (or *Ṣaḥīḥayn*) – the foremost and most revered collections of Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Abū-l-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī an-Nisābūrī (d. 261/875) (the latter is usually simply called “Muslim”) – and the four collections of Abū Dāwūd as-Sijistānī (d. 261/875), Abū ʿĪsā ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā at-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892 or

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302/915), Abū ʿAbdur-Raḥmān Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿayb an-Nasāʾī (d. 303/915), and Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ar-Rabīʿ ibn Mājāh (d. 273/886). Other collections drawn on in the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh* include the *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal Abū ʿAbd Allāh (d. 241/855), the *Sunan* of Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Bayhaqī Abū Bakr (d. 458/1066) and the *Sunan* of Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullah ibn ʿAbdur-Raḥmān at-Tamīmī ad-Dārimī (d. 255/869).

As interesting and important as the various scholarly and interpretive questions may be, it seemed to me that what was really important in responding to this selection was to discover how the material presented here might be practically utilized in the spirit of the Prophet’s ﷺ own preference for “useful knowledge”, reiterated by him in many sayings: “I seek refuge in God from a knowledge which has no use,” and “The knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like a treasure from which no charity is bestowed in the way of the Lord.” Or, as Ḥaḍrat ʿAlī put it, “Many an intellectual has been killed by his ignorance, his knowledge failing to profit him.” This “ignorance” is essentially the lower intellectualising process that overvalues the accumulation of inert facts and the fruitless spinning out of rationalizations, unsubstantiated opinions, conjectures, and speculations.

After all, the Ḥadīth have been transmitted to us not to encourage disputation but for our spiritual benefit, to guide us as we strive inwardly to conform to the divine pattern or image of God in which we were created, for, as the Qurʾān tells us, *God does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves* (13.11).

When the Prophet ﷺ spoke of “knowledge which has no use”, he was not of course referring to knowledge which fails to serve merely utilitarian ends. He was referring to knowledge that is neither real nor permanent, that contributes nothing to our understanding of the ultimate purpose for which we were created – that is, the knowledge and service of God. He was referring also to knowledge which remains abstract, and is not actively realised, lived, practised and embodied through the

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transformation of the lower self through inner work (the greater *jihād*) and thereby through right action in the world. Authentic action in the world for the wider betterment of society emerges first and foremost from the polished Heart, from the inner space of spiritual practice, deep reflection, contemplation and love.

The imperative to polish the Heart as a prerequisite for the transformation of society is powerfully expressed by Thomas Merton, the Catholic monk: “Those who attempt to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening their own self-understanding, freedom, integrity and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others. They will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of their own obsessions, their aggressiveness, their ego-centered ambitions, their delusions about ends and means, their doctrinaire prejudices and ideas.”

Given the primary intention to discover how we might make personal use of these sayings to draw us closer to God, we might wish to avoid a determined attempt to delve into the many controversial issues concerning their authenticity, in the same way as we might judge this not to be the place for a scholarly treatise on the science of Ḥadīth in all its complexity. However, the fact is that the valuation of Ḥadīth ranges from unquestioned acceptance of the reliability of the authoritative collections to the controversial contention that many of the Ḥadīth even in the revered collections can no longer be accepted as authentic.

The reader may well agree that such disparities in the valuation of Ḥadīth can hardly be ignored. How, it may reasonably be asked, can one draw out authentic guidance from sayings whose own authenticity is open to question? Is there not a danger that we may direct our lives and the lives of others on the basis of fabricated sayings which were spuriously attributed to the Prophet ﷺ but which were in fact motivated by the bigotry of those with a defective understanding of Islam?

In answer to this, Muḥammad Asad emphasises the critical scrutiny that was rigorously applied in order to sift genuine from concocted accounts:

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“The fact that there were numberless spurious *aḥādīth* did not in the least escape the attention of the *Muḥaddithūn*, as European critics naively seem to suppose. On the contrary, the critical science of *ḥadīth* was initiated by the necessity of discerning between authentic and spurious, and the very Imāms Bukhārī and Muslim, not to mention the lesser Traditionists, are direct products of this critical attitude. The existence, therefore, of false *aḥādīth* does not prove anything against the system of *ḥadīth* as a whole.”¹

In the case of the chain of transmission (*isnād*), the science of *Asmāʿ ar-Rijāl* was developed so as to scrutinise critically the lives of narrators. Meticulous and painstaking attention was paid to gathering every minute detail of their lives with impartiality, honesty, thoroughness and objectivity, and a similar rigour was applied to examining their intellectual abilities and moral standing. For example, the reliability of each narrator’s memory was thoroughly investigated so as to reinforce the likelihood that he or she should have correctly heard the words of the speaker, had understood their meaning, and had reproduced them accurately at the time of the narration. Furthermore, reliable narrators should be shown to have had an unblemished character. That good character and piety alone were insufficient qualifications, but should go hand in hand with depth of understanding, was made clear in the reaction of the Prophet’s beloved wife, ʿĀʾisha, on hearing an account reported on the authority of Ibn ʿUmar. Rejecting this account, she is reported to have remarked: “You and your transmitters do not tell lies, but sometimes one misunderstands.”

Taking this reassuring critical science as a starting-point, we can then go further by applying the formula offered by Ibn Khaldūn for interpreting Ḥadīth. This requires all acceptable traditions to be validated according to two criteria: the Qurʾān and Reason. The overriding importance of the Qurʾān as the touchstone for acceptability is, of course, derived from none other than the Prophet ﷺ himself: “There will be

¹ Muhammad Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads*. Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1982, page 91.

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narrators reporting ḥadīth from me, so judge by the Qurʾān; if a report agrees with the Qurʾān, accept it, if otherwise, reject it.”

Now, it cannot be denied that there has been an unwarranted elevation over time of the Ḥadīth as a source of guidance in competition with the Qurʾān itself, to the extent that verses of the Qurʾān which appear to conflict with favourite Ḥadīth may be declared to be abrogated by other verses which agree with the Ḥadīth in question. This idolization of Ḥadīth contradicts the incontrovertible truth that the Qurʾān alone should always be referred to as infallible guidance even if the Ḥadīth have been second only to the Qurʾān as the basis of Islamic law (*sharīʿah*).

One striking example will suffice to show the many conflicts between the Qurʾān and the Ḥadīth: The Qurʾān clearly allows freedom of religion, but both Bukhārī and Abū Dāwūd include the bizarre Ḥadīth, “If anyone leaves his religion, then kill him” (Bukhārī 52:260). Similarly, a very early source, the *Al-Muwattaʿ* of Mālik ibn Anas (d.179/795), states that anyone who leaves Islam for something else and divulges it is called upon to repent, but if he does not turn in repentance, he is killed. The penalty of death for apostasy is repeated elsewhere in Bukhārī: “Whoever changes his Islamic religion, then kill him” (Bukhārī 84:57). Another Ḥadīth (Bukhārī 83:37) holds that death is required in three cases: for a murderer, for a married person committing illegal sexual intercourse, and for one who deserts Islam. In this last case, historical evidence makes it clear that the apostates referred to here can be identified with those who are waging war against the Muslim community, and I will return to this critical point in due course.

The most oft-quoted Ḥadīth in Bukhārī, “If anyone leaves his religion, then kill him,” can be questioned on the grounds that its chain of transmission (*isnād*) goes through a source whose narrations were rejected by Imām Muslim because of the accusations of some scholars that the man concerned (ʿIkrimah) was a liar who also accepted gifts from various political authorities. Besides, the content of this Ḥadīth would also apply to anyone changing his religion to Islam, or from Christianity to

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Judaism or vice versa, and this clearly contradicts the Prophet's ﷺ command that “No one is to be turned away from their Judaism or Christianity.”

But the widespread assumption that Islam pronounces death for apostasy (*ridda*, *irtidād*) can be most persuasively challenged and definitively rejected from the evidence of the Qurʾān and the actions of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions.²

The Qurʾān repeatedly and unequivocally states that faith and denial are matters of personal choice in which there can be no coercion or interference, and that, in accordance with what Muḥammad Asad describes as a fundamental principle of Islamic ethics, each human soul must take personal responsibility for the consequences of that choice:

There shall be no coercion in matters of faith (2:256).

And say: The truth has now come from your Sustainer: let, then, him who wills, believe in it, and let him who wills, reject it (18:29).

Behold, from on high have We bestowed upon thee this divine writ, setting forth the truth for the benefit of all mankind. And whoever chooses to be guided thereby, does so for his own good, and whoever chooses to go astray, goes but astray to his own hurt: and thou hast not the power to determine their fate (39:41).

The Qurʾān also makes it clear that the Messengers of God are only warners and bringers of glad tidings, without any power to coerce or enforce:

I am nothing but a warner, and a herald of glad tidings unto people who will believe (7:188).

But if they turn away from thee, O Prophet, remember that thy only duty is a clear delivery of the message entrusted to thee (16:82).

² I am indebted to Mahmoud Mostafa for many of the citations which follow.

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Furthermore, the Qur^ʿān teaches that differences in belief are aspects of the diversity which God has ordained for human beings and that only God can give a final verdict on such differences:

Unto every one of you have We appointed a different law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but He willed it otherwise in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ (5:48).

For never would thy Sustainer destroy a community for wrong beliefs alone so long as its people behave righteously towards one another. And had thy Sustainer so willed, He could surely have made all mankind one single community: but He willed it otherwise, and so they continue to hold divergent views - all of them, save those upon whom thy Sustainer has bestowed His grace. (11:117-119).

And on whatever you may differ, O believers, the verdict thereon rests with God (42:10).

Qur^ʿān 5:48 above has been described as a “virtual manifesto of religious pluralism” and “a structural guarantee for the survival of more than one religion and every Muslim should know it by heart”.³ In his note to the same verse, Muḥammad Asad explains how “unity in diversity” is frequently stressed in the Qur^ʿān (as, for example, in the first sentence of 2:148, in 21:92-93, or in 23:52) and describes 11:118 as stressing once again “that the unceasing differentiation in men’s views and ideas is not incidental but represents a God-willed, basic factor of human existence.”

Finally, the Qur^ʿān does not lay down any legal penalty for apostasy; rather it addresses the consequences of spiritual regression, the falling back and willful denial of the truth after having accepted it, and this would

³ Murad W. Hofmann, “Religious Pluralism and Islam”, in *Islam and Global Dialogue, Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, edited by Roger Boase (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 238-239.

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apply to the followers of any religious community, not solely the Muslims.

As for anyone who denies God after having once attained to faith – and this, to be sure, does not apply to one who does it under duress, the while his heart remains true to his faith, but only to him who willingly opens up his heart to a denial of the truth: upon all such falls God's condemnation, and tremendous suffering awaits them (16:106).

This, and other verses such as 47:25 which refer to those who turn their backs on the message after guidance has been given to them, can legitimately be regarded as referring to the willful denial of truth in its widest sense, and not to the act of leaving institutional Islam.

Those who advocate death for apostates often hold that the much-quoted verse in the Qurʾān which forbids coercion in religion (2:256) is abrogated by the later revelation of 9:29:

And fight against those who – despite having been vouchsafed revelation aforetime – do not truly believe either in God or the Last Day.

However, as Muḥammad Asad demonstrates, this verse does not justify unprovoked aggression against non-believers and this is a timely opportunity to remind ourselves of the explicit Qurʾānic rule that only defensive warfare is permissible in Islam:

“In accordance with the fundamental principle – observed throughout my interpretation of the Qurʾān – that all of its statements and ordinances are mutually complementary and cannot, therefore, be correctly understood unless they are considered as parts of one integral whole, this verse, too must be read in the context of the clear-cut Qurʾānic rule that war is permitted only in self-defence. In other words, the above injunction to fight is relevant only in the event of aggression committed against the Muslim community or state, or in the presence of an unmistakable threat to its security... a view which has been shared by that great Islamic thinker, Muḥammad ʿAbduh. Commenting on this verse, he declared: ‘Fighting has been made obligatory in Islam only for the sake of defending the truth and its followers.... All the campaigns of the Prophet ﷺ were defensive in character; and so were the wars undertaken by the Companions in the earliest period of Islam’ (*Manār* X,

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332). In the context of an ordinance enjoining war against them, this ‘something’ can mean only one thing – namely, *unprovoked aggression*: for it is this that has been forbidden by God through *all the apostles* who were entrusted with conveying His message to man. Thus, the above verse must be understood as a call to the believers to fight against such – and only such – of the nominal followers of earlier revelation as deny their own professed beliefs by committing aggression against the followers of the Qur’ān.”⁴

This explanation points the way back to the Ḥadīth reported in Bukhārī with which I began this discussion on apostasy. One of these requires death for one who deserts Islam and who is also fighting against God and His Messenger. This is often quoted without any reference to its militant context. The apostates implicated here are those who were committing unprovoked aggression against the followers of the Qur’ān and against whom defensive warfare was therefore legitimately enjoined. In explaining the fact that the Prophet ﷺ accepted the repentance of some apostates but ordered others to be killed, even ibn Taimiyyah concluded that only apostasy that involved enmity and aggression against Muslims was unforgivable. It is clear that those apostates who were killed were those who were attacking Muslims or in alliance with their enemies and were therefore to be treated as enemy combatants intent on violent opposition to the Prophet’s ﷺ mission. This punishment was necessitated by the difficult circumstances of the time.

The actions of the Prophet ﷺ himself give no credence to the belief that apostates who were not waging unprovoked war on Muslims should be killed. Several individuals and groups left Islam during the life of the Prophet ﷺ, some of them several times, but he never called for their death. One of his scribes recanted and was unabashed in his apostasy, claiming that “Muḥammad only knows what I wrote for him!”, but in spite of this the Prophet ﷺ left him completely free and interceded for the

⁴ Muhammad Asad, note to Qur’ān 9:29 in *The Message of the Qur’an*. Bristol: The Book Foundation, 2003, pages 294-295.

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man on his deathbed. A group of twelve Muslims recanted and left Medina for Mecca, but the Prophet ﷺ did not spill any of their blood nor did he pronounce the death penalty on any of them. Two young men converted to Christianity and their father asked the Prophet ﷺ to curse them, but instead he recited the verse, *There shall be no coercion in matters of faith* (Qurʾān 2:256).

These cases, and others, prove that the Prophet ﷺ did not know, command or apply any penal code for apostasy.

Two final questions might be addressed in this necessarily brief study of the problem of apostasy.

Firstly, if the Qurʾān and the Prophet ﷺ give no justification for the killing of those apostates who are not waging war on Muslims, how does one explain the decision of Abū Bakr to wage war on the “apostates”? First of all, Abū Bakr did not start the war. It was the rebellious tribes who marched on Medina when they learned that the Muslim army had been sent north to Persia. The issue at stake was not apostasy, but their rejection of the payment of Zakāt and the authority of Abū Bakr, for they would only accept obedience to the Prophet ﷺ and no one after him. In fact, ʿUmar and some of the Companions did not agree with Abū Bakr that he should wage war on these tribes when they were actually Muslims who declared the oneness of God and the Prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ. The decision to do so was a matter of upholding the authority of the state, and was not a conflict over articles of faith.

Secondly, in view of the tolerance of the Companions in the face of the deviations from normative beliefs which they saw amongst various groups, how can one explain the development of uncompromising coercive principles, such as the death penalty for apostates, by rigidly authoritarian religious scholars?

The fact is that the Companions did not accuse the Qādiriyyah nor the Jābirīyyah of apostasy nor did the Successor Generation accuse the Muʿtazilites, the Murjiʿites, or the Jahmites of apostasy, despite their deviant doctrines, which included the denial that the Qurʾān is God’s

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Word, the rejection of the existence of any attributes of God, and the belief that whoever declares the two testimonies (no God but God and Muḥammad is His Messenger) is complete in his faith and has no need to perform a single action.

The elevation of Ḥadīth such as those pronouncing death for apostasy came about as a result of the desire of scholars to codify religious knowledge and to solidify laws towards the end of the Umayyad period and the beginning of the ʿAbbasid period, during a time of great strife between competing ideologies that gravely threatened the unity of the Ummah. In acting as protectors of the law and upholders of authority, they developed two principles to deal with anyone who rebelled against them: labelling as an apostate anyone who rejected their formulations and rulings, and coercing such people into compliance by the threat of death.

These two spurious principles are the product of historical circumstances and the need to uphold power and authority. They contradict the spirit of Islam and are not in line with the values and principles of the Qurʾān, nor with the life of the Prophet ﷺ and the Companions.

As for Ibn Khaldūn’s second criterion for validating Ḥadīth, that of Reason, this is explicitly referred to as a praiseworthy means of validating truth in Qurʾān 39:17–18: *Give, then, this glad tidings to those of my servants who listen closely to all that is said, and follow the best of it: for it is they whom God has graced with His guidance, and it is they who are truly endowed with insight.* Muḥammad Asad notes that, “according to Rāzī, this describes people who examine every religious proposition (in the widest sense of this term) in the light of their own reason, accepting that which their mind finds to be valid or possible, and rejecting all that does not measure up to the test of reason. In Rāzī’s words, the above verse expresses ‘a praise and commendation of following the evidence supplied by one’s reason (*hujjat al-ʿaql*), and of reaching one’s conclusions in accordance with critical examination (*naẓar*) and logical inference (*istidlāl*).” Asad

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points out that “a somewhat similar view is advanced, albeit in simpler terms, by Ṭabarī.”⁵

I would only add this caveat, so as not to reduce the faculty of “insight” to an exclusively rational level. The faculty of Reason or Insight to which the Qurʾān refers should not be confined to the lower rational process of intellectualization, referred to by Rumi as the intellect reduced to a “husk”. What the Qurʾān is referring to is the faculty of Intellection, the higher Intellect with a capital “I”, in the same way as the spiritual Heart can be distinguished from the heart, its physical or emotional counterpart. The faculty of *ʿaql* encompasses both the analytical capacities of the logical mind and the higher faculty of spiritual intelligence, or discerning insight (*albāb*) which is also denoted in the Qurʾān by other terms, such as *baṣīrah* and *ʿaṣraf*. To this should also be added a quality of moral valuation, for the Qurʾānic vision never separates cognitive from moral faculties. To exercise Reason, or to be “endowed with insight”, is also to hold to a standard or touchstone (*furqān*) which enables us to discern what is true from what is false and to distinguish what is right from what is wrong.

This faculty of discernment is an integral part of the essential nature or primordial disposition (*fiṭrah*) with which the human being has been imprinted by God and which gives him or her the potential to become His representative (*khalīfah*) on earth. It is a part of human character, for the word ‘character’ originally meant a stamp. Discernment is stamped, impressed or engraved on the soul as part of the authentic character of the human being who was created by God *fi ʾaḥsani taqwīm*, ‘in the best of moulds’ (Qurʾān 95:4), although it is the responsibility of each of us to live according to that divine pattern and to fulfill the sublime purpose for which we were created. At a largely unconscious level, it is simply ‘common sense’, a faculty possessed by all, “original” in its true sense.

⁵ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qurʾan*, op. cit., page 798.

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To Ādam was imparted the gift of the Names (Qurʾān 2:31), and this knowledge also conferred on us the linguistic faculty of verbal definition and conceptualisation which enables us to make rational choices.

This is not to imply, of course, that we can disregard the whole apparatus of Ḥadīth scholarship and resort to selecting only those Ḥadīth that appeal subjectively to our personal taste, or our prejudices and predilections. The faculty of discernment is a critical faculty that searches out the truth; it is not something that takes us into the comfort zone or panders to a mentality which wishes only to have its inclinations and biases confirmed or its ideological perspective reinforced.

Above all, it is a faculty dedicated to balance and equilibrium. As part of our *fiṭrah*, it is fashioned by God, like everything in Creation, *in due measure and proportion* (Qurʾān 54:49) as a fitting reflection of divine order and harmony. The word *taqwīm* in the phrase *fi ʾaḥsani taqwīm* quoted above also has the sense of ‘symmetry’ as well as ‘mould’.

There are many Ḥadīth on this central Islamic virtue of steering between extremes. On one occasion, the Prophet ﷺ said to Abū Bakr: “I passed you when you were praying in a low voice.” Abū Bakr said, “The One with whom I was holding intimate conversation heard me, O Messenger of God!” He then turned to ʿUmar and said, “I passed you when you were raising your voice while praying.” He replied, “Messenger of God, I was waking the drowsy and driving away the devil.” The Prophet ﷺ said, “Raise your voice a little, Abū Bakr,” and to ʿUmar he said, “Lower your voice a little.”

This is a beautiful commentary on the statement in the Qurʾān that Muslims are *a community of the middle way* (2:143), which suggests, according to Muḥammad Asad, “a call to moderation in every aspect of life”.

But what is meant by moderation? A dull compromise? A state of mediocrity or half-heartedness? A mere avoidance of difficult choices? Certainly not. Returning again to those verses in the Qurʾān in *Sūrah* 39 which urge us to use our reason in validating the truth, we are urged to

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listen closely to all that is said, and follow the best of it. Certainly, the best of it may often be the position which is most balanced and moderate, but it is not arrived at by a kind of quantitative calculation which finds a mathematical average or apparently equitable compromise irrespective of what is actually just, right and fair. The word ‘fair’ in English originally meant what is ‘fitting’ and ‘proportionate’ and its two modern meanings – ‘just’ and ‘beautiful’ – have preserved that connection to its original sense. Moderation and balance are qualitative states which honour what is appropriate and proportionate. The English word comes from Latin *modus*, ‘keeping within due measure’, which is related to another word which is also the source of English ‘modest’. Etymologically, moderation has the same inherent meaning in English as modesty, a connection which is also truly Islamic. The Prophet ﷺ himself said that “True modesty is the source of all virtues.” He said too that “Every religion has a distinctive feature and the distinctive feature of Islam is modesty.”

Charles le Gai Eaton has, himself, written beautifully on the topic of balance and equilibrium:

“But, in talking of beauty and praise, the healing powers of nature and the meaning hidden in sticks and stones, have I left out something important? What about the “Do’s” and “Don’ts” of religion? They have, ultimately, one purpose, and that is to establish harmony, balance, order within the individual personality as also in society; the same harmony, balance and order visible in creation as a whole, maintaining the birds in their flight, turning the growing plant towards the life-giving sun, and bringing the fruit to ripeness on the tree. In the disordered personality and in the disordered society, the “Do’s” and “Don’ts” may have to be imposed, but those are conditions under which the equilibrium inherent in creation has already been disturbed, as happens when people forget who they are and where they are going.”

And again,

“Let me, in conclusion, emphasise one of the most basic principles of Islam. Balance, both in spiritual life and in our human existence as

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creatures plunged into the light and shade of this world. As the Muslim sees it, there is another word for balance, and that is peace. The very word Islam is derived from the Arabic word for peace. Where balance is lacking there is conflict and disorder, both outward and inward. While it is maintained, men and women are free to turn to God as plants turn to the sun.⁶

This is a strikingly beautiful affirmation of the harmony and equilibrium inherent in the created order. If we can remember “who we are and where we are going” and by so doing restore in ourselves that balance, we will have access to that inner discernment which will enable us to be true to the Qurʾānic injunction to *listen closely to all that is said, and follow the best of it*.

In offering this selection of Ḥadīth by one whose clear, balanced and loving approach to Islam has opened so many hearts and eyes to what it means to be conscious of God, I could not be more confident that in making his selection he has been truly discerning in *following the best of it*. As I read these Ḥadīth over and over again, and reflected on them, I was repeatedly reminded of those verses of the Qurʾān which challenge us to wake up to a full sense of the moral and spiritual stature with which we have been endowed, and which was so perfectly embodied in the Prophet ﷺ.

And every human being will come forward with his erstwhile inner urges and his conscious mind, and will be told: “indeed, unmindful hast thou been of this Day of Judgement; but now We have lifted from thee thy veil, and sharp is thy sight today!” (Qurʾān 50:21-22)

⁶ These quotations are from the precious series of short talks on Islam, ninety in all, which Gai Eaton gave for the *Reflections* and *Words of Faith* series of broadcasts by the BBC World service between 1978 and 1996. These are as yet unpublished, although they are currently being serialised on the Book Foundation website (www.TheBook.org).

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To paraphrase Muḥammad Asad's detailed note on these verses,⁷ they refer to the contending nature of the two fundamental motive forces within man: on one side, that which drives (*ṣā'iq*), his primal, instinctive urges, inordinate appetites and unrestrained desires (often symbolized as *shayṭān*), and on the other side, his conscious reason (*shahīd*), both intuitive and reflective, or the awakening of the deeper layers of his consciousness, the "lifting of the veil" that leads to a sudden perception or witnessing of his own moral reality.

If we can move beyond a conception of Ḥadīth which selectively seeks to make them conform to a personal and self-righteous liking for rigid moralising; if we can lovingly discern the universal *principles* beneath the historically determined *forms*; if we can, above all, reflect on them not as a means of pontificating to others, or controlling, harassing and oppressing them, but as a means, in Asad's terms, of awakening the deeper layers of our own consciousness, we would make progress in abiding by the Prophet's ﷺ own advice that "He who knows himself knows his Lord", a saying so completely in harmony with the Qur'ānic statement that *God does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves* (13.11).

And that leads me to the practical purpose of this Introduction, for I began it not with the intention of writing a scholarly or explanatory treatise but with the more pressing experiential intention of exploring how these Ḥadīth can be a transformational influence in a living educational process which seeks to make us more fully human. For it can hardly be denied that if the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ, *al-insān al-kāmil*, the Perfect, Universal Man, play no part in helping us to improve our own character in emulation of his, then they fail to realise his own vision of a knowledge that is truly useful. To emulate the character of the Prophet ﷺ is also to approach closer to understanding the Qur'ān, for, as Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'isha is reported to have said in response to a man who asked her about

⁷ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān*, op. cit., page 909.

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the character of God's Messenger: "The Prophet's character was that of the Qur'ān."

In the process of discovering and exploring the profound utility of these Prophetic sayings, we discover many levels. They show the deep humanity, kindness, and beneficence of the Prophet ﷺ at a time when there is a pressing need to correct not only the many distortions about him, whether motivated by ignorance or malice, but also the widespread misconceptions about the intrinsically beautiful Islam which he revealed to us. We also find that the Ḥadīth enunciate and clarify doctrine and offer commentary upon it. They offer guidance for the deepening of knowledge, the improvement of conduct and character, and the strengthening of faith. Finally, and above all, they remain a luminous spiritual source of inspirational material for the transformation of Hearts, for without the Heart no injunction can ever be fully internalised, lived and embodied.

In considering how to exemplify a living educational approach to this selection of Ḥadīth, it finally dawned on me after much reflection that the most authentic illustration could only come from a description of how I had applied such an approach so as to expand my own understanding of the character of the Prophet ﷺ. And it also became clear that the best way to do this was to focus on just one example and describe in depth the learning processes which illuminated it.

In searching for a Ḥadīth to exemplify this learning process, I was guided by these opening words of a talk entitled *The Mercifulness of the Messenger of God* by the late Martin Lings, "The mercifulness of Sayyidunā Muḥammad ﷺ is affirmed by the Qur'ānic verse *We sent thee not save as a mercy to the worlds.*"⁸

There seemed to me to be no greater need at this time than to bring to light the merciful nature of the Prophet ﷺ. To repeat Ḥadrat 'Ā'isha's affirmation, "the Prophet's character was that of the Qur'ān", and every chapter of the Qur'ān, with only one single exception, begins with the

⁸ International Seerat Conference in Islamabad, 1985.

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Basmalah which contains the two names of Divine Mercy, *ar-Rahmān* and *ar-Rahīm*.

One does not have to look very far in this selection to find many Ḥadīth which testify eloquently to the Prophet's kindness, benevolence and mercy.

Two examples immediately come to mind:

Jābir and Ḥudhaifah related that the Messenger of God said, "Every act of kindness is charity" (Bukhārī & Muslim).

Abū Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of God said, "Forgiveness was granted to a prostitute who came upon a dog panting and almost dead from thirst at the mouth of a well. She took off her shoe, tied it with her head-covering, and drew some water for it. On that account she was forgiven." He was asked if people received a reward for what they did for animals, and he replied, "A reward is given in connection with every living creature." (Bukhārī)

But the one which led to the most exhaustive reflection and ultimately helped me to move closer to an understanding of the depth of the Prophet's ﷺ humanity was this one:

Ibn 'Abbās reported that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ complaining, "My wife rejects no one who lays a hand on her!" The Prophet ﷺ told him, "Divorce her." But the man told him, "I really love her." So the Prophet ﷺ said to him, "Then, hold on to her" (Abū Dāwūd).

Much reflection and discussion ensued over this Ḥadīth during the editing process. Reservations were felt about the potential difficulty in interpreting it in these times. It could be regarded as distinctly elliptical in that it does not state what surely must have been implicitly understood by the hearer – that some action, including discussion, advice and admonition, should also be taken to resolve this problem. Otherwise, we would have to believe that the Prophet ﷺ, recognising the strength of the man's love for his errant wife, is compassionately advising the man to turn a blind eye to her immorality. Could this be so, given our understanding

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of the totality of the Prophet's ﷺ character and given our knowledge of the Qurʾān?

In the absence of knowledge about the kind of moral norms which would have been understood by the hearer, was there not a danger that this Ḥadīth could be misinterpreted to sanction promiscuity and adultery? In answer to this reservation, it was pointed out that without explanatory commentary which also takes account of the context of the utterance, many Ḥadīth are open to broad and possibly skewed interpretation in the same way as the Qurʾān is commonly misinterpreted by those who fail to take a holistic view of the text. The Qurʾān itself warns us against this piecemeal approach: *Those who are deeply rooted in knowledge say: "We believe in it, the whole of the divine writ is from our Sustainer..."* (3:7).

Thus, the Ḥadīth under discussion presented interpretive challenges which were not essentially different from those presented by many other Ḥadīth compiled into collections offered without commentary.

A deep discussion then ensued which finally converged on what seemed to be the essential message of this Ḥadīth. We wanted to discover the core of that message in the same way as we understood how vital it was to try to absorb the message of the Qurʾān into our hearts instead of trying to fit it into an existing perspective or ideology, whether patriarchal, liberal, or anything else.

The Prophet ﷺ here deals in a most compassionate way with a situation that might be expected to lead to inevitable divorce. Furthermore, in terms of the rigid social traditions associated with a dogmatic legalistic approach to enforcing puritanical moral codes in dealing with women whose sexual behaviour was judged to be unacceptable, such a woman might have been subject to violence, or at the very least might have been ostracized. And we need to acknowledge fully that such attitudes are still prevalent today and cause much suffering amongst women.

But the Prophet ﷺ does not adopt a legalistic or punitive approach to resolving this matter; he leaves a private relationship to be worked out

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between the two parties. He guides his companion to be patient and to let his love for his wife work its transforming power upon her. The Ḥadīth also shows how the Prophet ﷺ treated women with equity, because if the roles were reversed, a wife would not have been able to apply force or act with violence to restrain her husband from immoral conduct; she would have had the option of either exercising patience in working on the relationship or separating from him. He gave his companion the same choices that his wife would have had. Such equity is fully in keeping with the fact that a very significant part of his mission to humanity was the emancipation of the weak and oppressed, and this applied especially to women. Regrettably, this still applies to the treatment of women in many Islamic (and other) societies today, not only in obvious examples of inequality and subjugation sanctioned by oppressive laws and social traditions but also in the widespread ill-treatment of women even in those supposedly liberal societies where equality is enshrined in law.

If the Qurʾān lays down principles of equity and if many of the Prophet's ﷺ own statements broke the conventional mould of a rigidly patriarchal, tribal order, then when determining the authenticity of a Prophetic saying, are we to give more credence to statements that seem to defend and justify an unjust patriarchal order or those that establish respect and fairness towards women?

As my understanding of the full humanity of the Prophet ﷺ continued to grow from further meditation on this Ḥadīth, I recalled his love for women, and his luminous statement, much beloved in the deepest spiritual circles of Islam, “Three things have been made beloved to me in this world: women, fragrance, and prayer, in which is the delight of my eyes.” And, affirming too his deep respect for ʿĀʾisha, he said of her, “Take half of your religion from this red-haired one.”

Guided by the Qurʾānic vision of the precedence of the Divine Mercy, I recalled, too, the famous incident reported in the Gospels in which the Pharisees, in an attempt to discredit Jesus, brought a woman

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charged with adultery before him. Being the epitome of a rigidly legalistic mentality, they reminded Jesus that adultery was punishable by stoning under Mosaic Law and challenged him to judge the woman so that they might then accuse him of disobeying the law. Jesus thought for a moment and then replied, “He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her.” The people crowded around him were so touched by their own consciences that they departed. When Jesus found himself alone with the woman, he asked her who were her accusers. She replied, “No man, lord.” Jesus then said, “Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more.” (Gospel of St. John 8:7)

My understanding was strengthened too by reflecting on other Hadīth in the collection which gave further evidence of the humanity, kindness and sheer common sense of the Prophet ﷺ. Two of them, for example, amongst many others, showed very clearly his compassionate awareness of human limitations and his loving concern that we should not oppress ourselves with unsustainable spiritual burdens and disproportionate self-criticism:

Ibn ʿAbbās related that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, “I have thoughts of such a nature that I would rather be burned to a crisp than speak about them!” Muḥammad ﷺ said, *Praise be to God who has limited the matter to promptings of the mind.* (Abū Dāwūd)

ʿĀʾishah also reported that the Messenger of God said: “Take on those practices which you have the capacity to sustain, for God does not grow weary unless you do” (Bukhārī & Muslim).

And finally: ʿĀʾishah narrated that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, “Avoid the infliction of prescribed penalties on Muslims as much as you can and, if there is any way out, let a man go; for it is better for a leader to make a mistake in forgiving than to make a mistake in punishing.” (Tirmidhī)

The picture we can form from such sayings of the balanced and practical wisdom of the Prophet ﷺ gives all the more credence to the conciliatory marital advice he gives to his companion. More and more, a

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vista opened upon the all-encompassing “mercifulness of the Messenger of God”.

I have necessarily simplified here a dialectical learning process which in fact negotiated many complex issues and encountered some challenging paradoxes which will continue to provoke much further discussion and reflection. That is surely as it should be, for just as the Prophet ﷺ himself prayed to God to increase his knowledge and improve his character, so it is incumbent upon those men and women of faith who seek to emulate him to be open to the same possibility of advancement at all times, for, with the Grace of God, there is no end to the knowledge which is being continually revealed to us.

That said, here are eleven principles that have emerged for me in exploring the Ḥadīth in question:

1. Follow the touchstone given by the Prophet ﷺ himself: “There will be narrators reporting ḥadīth from me, so judge by the Qurʾān; if a report agrees with the Qurʾān, accept it, if otherwise, reject it.”
2. When judging by the Qurʾān, follow the over-arching principles enshrined in the Holy Book as a whole.
3. Follow the Qurʾānic advice to *listen to all that is said and follow the best of it*. In other words, adopt the additional criterion (after the Qurʾān) of Reason proposed by Ibn Khaldūn, realising that this is not just a cerebral rational process (important as this is for the development of critical thinking) but the activation of the higher faculty of discernment or insight arising from deep reflection and contemplation.
4. Immerse yourself in the character of the Prophet ﷺ through extensive reading, so that you form as faithful and complete a picture of him as you can and are therefore more able to interpret a particular saying in the light of the totality of his character. Identify the recurring aspects of his character which can act as

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leitmotifs or orienting points of reference for interpreting his sayings: thus, his flexibility, kindness, humanity, mercifulness, moderation. This holistic awareness of the major themes in the Prophet's ﷺ character is an exact parallel to the process of identifying the over-arching principles in the text of the Qur'ān as a whole.

5. Engage in dialogue and discussion with people of knowledge, insight and character so as to refine your own understanding through the dialectical process.
6. Through honest self-examination, identify the false certainties provided by your own fixed ideas, inherited dogmas, conditioned belief systems, cultural preconceptions, sectarian affiliations, limiting perspectives, and ideologies. You cannot swim in the Ocean of the Prophet's ﷺ character while you remain rooted to one small island within it.
7. Seek parallels in the revealed scriptures of other religious traditions in order to strengthen your grasp of the universal principles governing the *dīn al-fiṭra*.
8. Reflect upon how the reforming mission of the Prophet ﷺ (to bring social justice, for example) still applies in the contemporary world and work peacefully in your own way to make that justice a reality in your own society.
9. Having done the work of acquiring knowledge through all the processes described above, open your heart to the promptings of the Spirit which can guide you to a clear and uncluttered vision of the Truth. At this stage, there is the possibility that a deeper illumination can emerge which distils the essence of what one needs to know and which discards much complex detail in the process.
10. Strive to embody the virtues of The Prophet ﷺ in your own life. He is reported to have said, "Who are the learned? Those who practise what they know." An example: practise daily acts of

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kindness towards people and animals. Scan the Ḥadīth for ways in which the Prophet ﷺ taught that charity could be shown, remembering that even a smile is Charity.

11. Above all, remember that the Prophet ﷺ guides us to a spiritual reality which transcends our life on this earth. This spiritual reality is ultimately the Only Reality, for if the character of the Prophet ﷺ is the Qurʾān, and if the Qurʾān is a book for those who acknowledge the Unseen, *al-ghayb*, that which is beyond the reach of human perception (Qurʾān 2:3), then the Prophet's ﷺ example guides us to that ultimate reality beyond anything which can, in the words of Muḥammad Asad, “be proved or disproved by scientific observation or even adequately comprised within the accepted categories of speculative thought.”

In conclusion, and as a commentary on this eleventh and most important principle, I can think of nothing more beautiful or appropriate than to quote some words of Martin Lings from the *The Mercifulness of the Messenger of God*, the source with which I began this exploration of a single Ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ from the collection offered to you here:

“To be the Key of Mercy means being of a paradisaic nature, and many things in the Prophet's ﷺ life suggest that once the *Mirāj* had taken place Heaven refused to relinquish him altogether, and that it still clung to him after he returned to earth. His sayings confirm this: we read for example in Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī that on one occasion he was seen to stretch out his hand as if to take something, and then he drew it back. When his companions questioned him about it he said: ‘I saw paradise, and I reached out for a cluster of its grapes. If I had taken it, ye would have eaten of it as long as this world endureth.’ To take another example, he said from his pulpit in the Mosque on the day when his last illness began: ‘I go before you and I am your witness. Your meeting with me is at the pool, which I see from here, where now I stand.’

“The very essence of the Prophet's ﷺ mercifulness is that, returning from his direct experience of Paradise, the Prophet ﷺ lived with his people to guide them to that place of the ‘99 mercies of God.’

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“God has rooted deeply, in every human soul, the imperative desire for perfect happiness that will never end; and the existence of this desire is a proof – not logical, but intellectual and metaphysical – that man was originally made for Paradise, as all religions teach. Any meditation by man upon his own mysteriously transcendent appetite can be immeasurably helped by recalling that aspect of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which we have dwelt on here, his fidelity to Paradise as man’s one and only homeland...”

May God guide the readers of these Prophetic sayings to the realisation that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Key of Mercy, is also the Key of Paradise.

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France

On Islām, Īmān (Faith), and Iḥsān (Righteousness)

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه : قال رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم – :
"الإيمان بضع وسبعون شعبة، فأفضلها قول لا إله إلا الله، و أدناها إماطة الأذى
عن الطريق، و الحياء شعبة من الإيمان." متفق عليه

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Faith has more than seventy branches, the best of which is to declare *Lā ilāha illā Allāh*, and the least of which is the removal of harm from the path; and modesty is one of the branches of faith." (Universally Agreed)

عن عبد الله بن عمرو رضي الله عنهما : قال رسول الله – صلى الله عليه عليه
وسلم – : "المسلم من سلم المسلمون من لسانه و يده، و المهاجر من هجر ما نهى
الله عنه." أخرجه البخاري

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "The Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe, and the emigrant is he who abandons what God has prohibited." (Bukhārī)

عن سفيان بن عبد الله الثقفي قال: قلت يا رسول الله، قل لي في الإسلام قولاً،
لا أسأل عنه أحداً بعدك، قال رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم – : " قل أمنت
بالله، فأستقم." أخرجه مسلم

Sufyān ibn ʿAbdullāh Atthaqafī asked the Messenger of God to "Tell me about Islām that which will suffice me from asking anyone else after you about it." The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Say, 'I have faith in Allāh,' then become upright." (Muslim)

عن معاذ بن جبل رضي الله عنه قال : كنت ردف النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم على حمار يقال له عُفَيْرٌ فقال : " يا معاذ، هل تدري ما حق الله على عباده؟ وما حق العباد على الله؟ " قلت: الله ورسوله أعلم. قال: " فإن حق الله على العباد أن يعبدوه ولا يشركوا به شيئاً، وحق العباد على الله أن لا يعذب من لا يشرك به شيئاً. " فقلت: يا رسول الله، أفلا أبشر به الناس؟ قال: " لا تبشروهم فيتَكَلِّوا. " أخرجه البخاري

The Messenger ﷺ asked one of his Companions, "O Mu'adh! Do you know Allāh's right over His servants and their right over Him? Allāh's right over His servants is that they serve Him alone and associate nothing with Him. And their right is that He should not punish anyone who does not associate with Him anything." Mu'adh said, "Shall I give this good news to the people?" The Prophet replied, "Do not tell them, or they will depend on it and stop exerting themselves." (Bukhārī & Muslim)

وعن عبادة بن الصامت قال: قال رسول الله - صلى الله عليه وسلم - : "من شهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له، وأن محمدا عبده ورسوله، وأن عيسى عبد الله ورسوله، وابن أمته، وكلمته ألقاها إلى مريم، وروح منه، والجنة حق، والنار حق، أدخله الله الجنة على ما كان من العمل." أخرجه البخاري

'Ibadah Ibn Assamet related that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "If anyone bears witness that there is no deity save God alone, who has no partner, that Muḥammad is His Servant and His Messenger, that Jesus is God's Servant and Messenger, the son of His Handmaid, and His Word which He cast into Mary and a Spirit from Him, and that Paradise and Hell are real, God will cause him to enter Paradise, no matter what he has done." (Bukhārī & Muslim)

عن عمرو بن العاص رضي الله عنه : قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه : " أما عَلِمْتَ أن الإسلام يهدم ما كان قبله، و أن الهجرة تهدم ما كان قبلها، و أن الحج يهدم ما كان قبله؟ " أخرجه مسلم

The Prophet ﷺ said, "O 'Amrū! Do you not know that Islām, emigration, and Ḥajj all efface what was before them?" (Muslim)

ON ISLĀM, ĪMĀN (FAITH), AND IḤSĀN (RIGHTEOUSNESS)

عن عثمان رضي الله عنه قال : قال رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم –
:"من مات و هو يعلم أنه لا إله إلا الله دخل الجنة." أخرجه مسلم

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Whoever dies knowing that there is no deity but God will enter Paradise." (Muslim)

عن عبد الله بن مسعود رضي الله عنه : قال رجل: يا رسول الله، أي الذنب
أكبر عند الله؟ قال: " أن تدعو لله ندا و هو خلقك." أخرجه البخاري ومسلم

A man asked, "O Messenger of God, what is the greatest sin in the sight of God?" He said, "That you would call upon anything as if it is equal to God who created you." (Bukhārī & Muslim)

عن أنس رضي الله عنه : قال رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم – : "إن
الشيطان يجري من الإنسان مجرى الدم." أخرجه البخاري ومسلم

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "The devil flows in mankind as blood flows." (Bukhārī & Muslim)

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه : أن رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم – قال
:"ما من مولود يولد إلا نخسه الشيطان ، فيستهل صارخا من نخسة الشيطان، إلا
ابن مريم وأمه. ثم قال أبو هريرة إقرأوا إن شئتم " وإني اعيزها بك وذريتها من
الشيطان الرجيم" أخرجه البخاري ومسلم

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Every person is touched by Satan as soon as they are born and this is why the newborn cries, except for Mary and her son." Then Abū Huraira said, "Recite if you will: *And I seek refuge through you for her and her progeny from Satan the outcast.*" (3:36) (Bukhārī & Muslim)

عن جابر رضي الله عنه : قال سمعت النبي – صلى الله عليه وسلم – يقول :
"إن الشيطان قد أيس من أن يعبد المصلون في جزيرة العرب، و لكن في
التحريش بينهم." (كلمة تحريش معناها إثارة الفتنة). أخرجه مسلم

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Verily, Satan has despaired of being worshipped by those who pray in the Arabian Peninsula, but he has hopes of setting them against one another." (Muslim)

عن ابن عباس – رضي الله عنهما – جاء رجل إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم
فقال: يا رسول الله إن أهدنا نجد في نفسه يعرض بالشيء لأن يكون حُممة أحب
إليه من أن يتكلم به فقال : "الله أكبر الله أكبر الله أكبر الحمد لله الذي رد كيده إلى
الوسوسة." أخرجه أبو داود

Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنهما related that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "I have thoughts of such a nature that I would rather be burned to a crisp than speak about them!" Muḥammad said, "God is Great, God is great, God is great! Praise be to God who has limited the matter to promptings of the mind." (Abū Dā‘ūd)

عن علي رضي الله عنه : قال كنا في جنازة في بقيع الغرقد فأتانا رسول الله
صلى الله عليه وسلم فقعده وقعدنا حوله ومعه مخرقة ، فنكس فجعل ينكت
بمخصرته ، ثم قال : ما منكم من أحد ، ما من نفس منفوسة إلا وقد كتب الله
مكانها من الجنة والنار، وإلا وقد كتبت شقية أو سعيدة قال : فقال رجل يا رسول
الله أفلا نتكل على كتابنا وندع العمل ؟ فقال " من كان من أهل السعادة فسيصير
إلى عمل أهل السعادة ومن كان من أهل الشقاوة فسيصير إلى عمل أهل الشقاوة .
فقال : اعملوا فكل ميسر ، أما أهل السعادة فييسرون لعمل أهل السعادة ، وأما
أهل الشقاوة فييسرون لعمل أهل الشقاوة . ثم قرأ " فأما من أعطى واتقى (5)
وصدق بالحسنى (6) فسنيسره لليسرى (7) وأما من بخل واستغنى (8) وكذب
بالحسنى (9) فسنيسره للعسرى (10) . " أخرجه البخاري ومسلم

Ali relates that, "We were at a funeral in Baqī‘ when the Messenger of God ﷺ came and sat down and we sat down around him. He had a walking staff with him and he started to turn it and strike the ground with it. Then he said, "Every one of you, without exception, has their place in

the fire or the garden prescribed and is decreed to suffering or happiness.” They replied, “Then should we depend on our destiny and abandon action?” He answered, “Whoever is among the people of happiness is compelled to the actions of the people of happiness and whoever is among the people of suffering is compelled to the actions of the people of suffering. Act, for everyone is aided, those who are among the people of happiness are aided to do the work of happiness and those who are among the people of suffering are aided to do the work of suffering.” Then he recited: *As to the one who gives and is conscious of God, and is true to what is good, We shall aid him towards ease. And as for one who is stingy and withholds and denies goodness, We shall aid him towards difficulty.*” (Bukhārī & Muslim)

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه : قال رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم –
: "ما من مولود إلا يولد على الفطرة، فأبواه يهودانه، وينصرانه، ويمجسانه كما
تنتج البهيمة بهيمة جمعاء هل تحسون فيها من جدعاء، ثم يقول أبو هريرة
وأقرأوا إن شئتم " فطرت الله التي فطر الناس عليها لا تبديل لخلق الله . " أخرجه
البخاري ومسلم

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, “Everyone is born with an innately pure nature, just as cattle produce whole offspring without any branding. Then their parents condition them into following organized religion, be it Judaism, Christianity, or Zoroastrianism,” Then Abū Huraira recited: *In accordance with the natural disposition which God has instilled into the human being. There is no changing God’s creation.* (30:30) (Bukhārī & Muslim)

عن أبي موسى رضي الله عنه قال : قام فينا رسول الله – صلى الله عليه عليه
وسلم بخمس كلمات فقال – : "إن الله عز وجل لا ينام، ولا ينبغي له أن ينام، يخفظ
القسط و يرفعه، و يُرْفَعُ إليه عمل الليل قبل عمل النهار وعمل النهار قبل عمل
الليل حجابهُ النور، لو كشفه لأحرق سبحات وجهه ما انتهى إليه بصره من
خلقه" أخرجه مسلم .

BOOK OF HADĪTH

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allāh does not sleep, nor does sleep befit Him. He sends down and raises up in just measure; and all actions by night or day ascend to Him. His veil is Light. If He were to remove it, the majesty of His Countenance would burn up all of His creation.” (Muslim)

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه : أن رسول الله -صلى الله عليه وسلم قال -
: "يد الله ملى، لا يغيضها نفقة سحاء الليل والنهار وقال رأيتهم ما أنفق منذ خلق
السموات والأرض فإنه لم يغيض ما في يده وقال : عرشه على الماء ويده
الأخرى الميزان يخفض ويرفع . " أخرجه البخاري

The Prophet ﷺ said, “God’s hand is full, undiminished by any expenditure throughout night and day. Do you see what He has given since the creation of the heavens and earth? It has not diminished what is in His hand. His throne is upon the water and in His other hand is the Scale constantly in balance.” (Bukhārī & Muslim)

عن أبي هريرة - رضي الله عنه- قال: خرج علينا رسول الله - صلى الله
عليه وسلم - ونحن نتنازع في القدر، فغضب حتى احمر وجهه حتى كأنما فتق
في وجنتيه الرمان، فقال: "أبهذا أمرتم؟، أما بهذا أرسلت إليكم؟، إنما هلك من
كان قبلكم حين تنازعوا في هذا الأمر، عزمت عليكم ألا تتنازعوا فيه." رواه
الترمذي

Abū Hurayrah رضى الله عنه related that the Prophet ﷺ came upon us as we were arguing about destiny. He became angry to the point that his face was as red as a pomegranate seed and he said, “Is this what you have been commanded to do? Or is this what I have been sent to you with? Nothing but contention over this matter has caused those who came before you to perish. I urge you not to argue about this.” (Tirmidhī)

عن أبي موسى الأشعري رضي الله عنه : عن النبي - صلى الله عليه وسلم
قال - : "إن هذا القلب كريشة بفلاة من الأرض يقيمها الريح ظهر لبطن." مسند
أحمد

ON ISLĀM, ĪMĀN (FAITH), AND IHSĀN (RIGHTEOUSNESS)

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, “The heart is like a feather in desert country, which the winds keep turning over and over.” (Aḥmad)

عن أبي الدرداء – رضي الله عنه – قال: بينما نحن عند رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم – نتذاكر ما يكون، إذ قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم – : "إذا سمعتم بجبل زال عن مكانه فصدقوا، وإذا سمعتم برجل تغير عن خلقه فلا تصدقوا به، وإنه يصير إلى ما جُبل عليه." رواه أحمد

Abū Dardā رضي الله عنه related that while they were learning with the Messenger of God ﷺ he said, “When you hear that a mountain has moved from its place, believe it; but when you hear that a man’s nature has changed, do not believe it, for he will remain true to his inborn disposition.” (Aḥmad)

عن أم سلمة – رضي الله عنها – قالت: يا رسول الله، لا يزال يصيبك كل عام وجع من الشاة المسمومة التي أكلت. قال: "ما أصابني شيء منها إلا وهو مكتوب عليّ و آدم في طينته." رواه ابن ماجه

Umm Salamah رضي الله عنها said, “O Messenger of God, you are still afflicted each year with pain from that poisoned sheep you ate.” He replied, “I am afflicted by nothing which was not decreed for me while Adam was still a lump of clay.” (Ibn Mājah)

عن جابر رضي الله عنه قال : جاءت ملائكة إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وهو نائم فقال بعضهم إنه نائم ، وقال بعضهم إن العين نائمة والقلب يقظان فقالوا : إن لصاحبكم هذا مثلاً فأضربوا له مثلاً ، فقال بعضهم : إنه نائم ، وقال بعضهم : إن العين نائمة والقلب يقظان ، فقالوا : مثله كمثل رجل بنى داراً وجعل فيها مآذبة وبعث داعياً فمن أجاب الداعي دخل الدار وأكل من المآذبة ، ومن لم يجب الداعي لم يدخل الدار ولم يأكل من المآذبة فقالوا : أولوها له بفقهها فقال بعضهم : إنه نائم وقال بعضهم إن العين نائمة والقلب يقظان ، فقالوا : فالدار الجنة والداعي محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم فمن أطاع محمداً صلى الله عليه وسلم فقد أطاع الله ومن عصى محمداً صلى الله عليه وسلم فقد عصى الله ، ومحمدٌ صلى الله عليه وسلم فرّق بين الناس . رواه البخاري

Jābir رضي الله عنه reported that angels came to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as he slept and they said, “Verily, there is a similitude for this companion of ours, so strike it for him.” Some said he is asleep and others said the eye sleeps but the heart is awake. Then they said, “His similitude is of one who builds a house and sets a great feast therein and then he sends a caller to invite people to this feast. Whoever responds to the invitation enters the house and partakes of the feast with him and whoever does not respond will not enter or partake of the feast.” Then they said, “Interpret it for him so that he may understand.” Then they said, “The house is Paradise, the caller is Muḥammad. So whoever responds to the caller obeys Allāh and whoever does not respond disobeys Allāh. Muḥammad is the one who distinguishes between people.” (Bukhārī)

عن أنس - رضي الله عنه - قال: جاء ثلاثة رهط إلى أزواج النبي - صلى الله عليه وسلم - يسألون عن عبادة النبي - صلى الله عليه وسلم - فلما أخبروا كأنهم تقالوها، فقالوا أئین نحن من النبي - صلى الله عليه وسلم - وقد غفر الله له ما تقدم من ذنبه وما تأخر! فقال أحدهم: أما أنا فأصلي الليل أبدا، وقال الآخر: أنا أصوم النهار أبدا ولا أفطر، وقال الآخر: أنا أعتزل النساء فلا أتزوج أبدا. فجاء النبي - صلى الله عليه وسلم - إليهم فقال: "أنتم الذين قلتم كذا وكذا؟، أما والله إني لأخشاكم لله وأتقاكم له، لكني أصوم وأفطر، وأصلي وأرقد، وأتزوج النساء، فمن رغب عن سنتي فليس مني." أخرجه البخاري ومسلم

Anas رضي الله عنه related that three people came to the wives of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to ask about his acts of worship. When they were informed of his practices they said to each other, “Where are we in comparison to the Prophet whose sins have been forgiven?” Then each one stated their intent to undertake extreme practices. One said, “I will pray throughout the night forever.” And the other said, “As for me I will fast every day forever.” And the third said, “I will abstain from women and never marry.” Later the Prophet came to them after hearing what they were intent upon and told them, “By God, I am more in awe of Allāh than any of you, and I am more conscious of Him than any of you, yet I fast and I break my fast, and I pray the night and I sleep, and I marry and keep the company of women. Whoever desires other than my way is not of me!” (Bukhārī & Muslim)

ON ISLĀM, ĪMĀN (FAITH), AND IHSĀN (RIGHTEOUSNESS)

وعن رافع بن خديج – رضي الله عنه – قال: قدم نبي الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم المدينة – وهم يُؤبِرُونَ النخل، يقولون يلقحون النخل فقال: "ما تصنعون؟" قالوا: كنا نصنعه. قال: "لعلكم لو لم تفعلوا كان خيرا." فتركوه؛ فنفضت أوفنقصت؛ قال فذكروا ذلك له فقال: "إنما أنا بشر إذا أمرتكم بشيء من أمر دينكم فخذوا به، وإذا أمرتكم بشيء من رأيي فإنما أنا بشر." رواه مسلم

Rafea Ibn Khadeej رضي الله عنه said that one day the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم passed by while people were fertilizing palm trees and asked them what they were doing. When they told him, he said, "Maybe it would be better if you did not do this." So they stopped and as a result the fruits were reduced. When they mentioned this to him, he said to them, "I am only a human being. When I command you regarding your religion, accept it; but when I command you based on my own opinion, I am merely a human being." (Muslim)

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم – : "بدأ الإسلام غريبا، و سيعود كما بدأ، فطوبى للغرباء." أخرجه مسلم

The Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Islām began as something strange and it will return to the way it started, so blessed are the strange ones." (Muslim)

عن أبي هريرة – رضي الله عنه – قال: قال رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم – : "إنكم في زمان من تترك منكم عشر ما أمر به هلك، ثم يأتي زمان من عمل منهم بعشر ما أمر به نجا." رواه الترمذي

Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه related that the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said, "In the times in which you are living, anyone who abandons a tenth of what he is commanded will perish; but a time is coming when anyone who does a tenth of what he is commanded will be saved." (Tirmidhī)

عن معاذ بن جبل – رضي الله عنه – قال: قال رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم –: "إن الشيطان ذئب الإنسان كذئب الغنم، يأخذ الشاة القاصية والناحية، فأياكم والشعاب، وعليكم بالجماعة والعامّة والمسجد" رواه أحمد .

Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه related that the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “The devil is to man as the wolf is to sheep; he stalks them, catching the one which is solitary, the one which strays far from the flock, and the one which wanders off. So avoid the branching paths and keep to the general community, and to the places of worship.” (Aḥmad)

عن حُميد بن عبد الرحمن بن عوف قال : سمعت معاوية بن أبي سفيان وهو يخطب يقول : إني سمعت رسول – صلى الله عليه وسلم – يقول : "من يرد الله به خيرا يُفَقِّهْهُ في الدين، وإنما أنا قاسم ويعطي الله." أخرجه البخاري ومسلم

The Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “When God wishes good for anyone, he causes him to understand religion. I am only one who makes clear, while Allāh is the one who gives.” (Bukhārī & Muslim)

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال : قال رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم – : " من نَفَسَ عن مؤمن كُرْبَةً من كُرْبِ الدنيا نَفَسَ اللهُ عنه كُرْبَةً من كُرْبِ يوم القيامة، و من يَسِّرَ على مُعْسِرٍ يَسِّرَ اللهُ عليه في الدنيا والآخرة، و من سَتَرَ مسلماً سَتَرَهُ اللهُ في الدنيا والآخرة، والله في عون العبد ما كان العبد في عون أخيه، و من سلك طريقاً يلتمس فيه علماً سَهَّلَ اللهُ له به طريقاً إلى الجنة، و ما اجتمع قوم في بيت من بيوت الله يتلون كتاب الله و يتدارسونه بينهم إلا نزلت عليهم السكينة، و غشيتهم الرحمة، و حَفَّتْهم الملائكة، و ذَكَرَهُم اللهُ فيمن عنده، و من بَطَأَ به عمله لم يُسْرِعْ به نَسَبُهُ." رواه مسلم

The Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “Whoever relieves one of the faithful ones of a worldly worry, God will relieve him of one of the worries of the Day of Resurrection. And whoever eases the way for one who is destitute, God will ease the way for him in this world and the next. And whoever protects a Muslim, God will protect him in this world and the next. God helps a man as long as he helps his brother. If anyone pursues a path in search of knowledge, God will thereby make easy for him a path

to Paradise. Any group that gathers in one of the houses of God to recite God's Book and study it together will have stillness descend upon them, and mercy engulf them, and the angels surround them, and God will mention them among those near to Him. And whoever procrastinates in his practices will not move forward by his lineage." (Muslim)

عن أبي الدرداء رضي الله عنه قال : سمعت رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول – : "من سلك طريقا يطلب فيه علما سلك الله به طريقا من طرق الجنة، و إن الملائكة لتضع أجنحتها رضا لطالب العلم، و إن العالم ليستغفر له من في السموات ومن في الأرض، والحيتان في جوف الماء، و إن فضل العالم على العابد كفضل القمر ليلة البدر على سائر الكواكب، و إن العلماء ورثة الأنبياء، و إن الأنبياء لم يُورثوا دينارا ولا درهما، و رثوا العلم فمن أخذه أخذ بحظ وافر." رواه أحمد و الترمذي و ابن ماجه

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "If anyone travels a path in search of knowledge, God will conduct him through one of the paths of Paradise; the angels will lower their wings from good pleasure with the one who seeks knowledge, and the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, and the fish in the depths of the water will seek forgiveness for him. The superior position of the Gnostic over the worshipper is as the position of the full moon over the stars. The Gnostics are the heirs of the prophets. The prophets did not inherit any money, they have only inherited knowledge and whoever attains to it is one who has Abundant fortune." (Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Abū Dāʿūd)

عن أبي أمامة الباهلي رضي الله عنه قال : قال رسول الله – صلى الله عليه وسلم – : "إن الله و ملائكته، و أهل السماوات والأرض، حتى النملة في جحرها، و حتى الحوت، ليصلون على مُعَلِّم الناس الخير." رواه الترمذي

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Verily God, His angels, and all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, even the ant in its hole and even the fish, invoke blessings upon the one who teaches people what is good." (Tirmidhī)